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ORIGIN OF PLACE NAMES 1964
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ORIGIN OF PLACE NAMES IN THE EDMONTON REGION

The various place names in the Edmonton Region have had a variety of origins. The name Edmonton itself originated with the Hudson's Bay Company fort built in 1795. It was named by George Sutherland to compliment his clerk John Pruden, a native of Edmonton near London, England. The places in the region may be classified under various headings listed as follows:

1. European Origin

Besides Edmonton itself, several other centres derived from European origins. Drayton Valley, for instance, was named after a village in Hampshire, England, from where the wife of the postmaster came. Strangely, it was named "Power House" before 1920, while now it is the oil centre of the Pembina field and not far from the Brazeau Dam. Calmar, Thorsby, and Warburg are all of Swedish derivation. Kalmar, Sweden, the home of the first postmaster, C.J. Blomquist, is Calmar's namesake and dates from 1895. Thorsby dates from 1929 and is directly named from a community in Sweden. Warburg was derived in 1916 from Warberg, an ancient castle in Sweden.

2. American Origin

Three places derive from U.S. origins. Coronado was named after Coronado, California in 1921. Genesee was named in 1916 after an early settler from his hometown in New York State. Sangudo is perhaps most interesting in that it was named after two U.S. towns, Santa and Gudo, in 1912.

3. Religious Origin

Roman Catholic missionaries named many of the places in the West.

St. Albert was named after Albert Lacombe by Bishop Tache in 1861, when he chose the spot for the mission. Lac Ste. Anne was originally Monito Lake on David Thompson's 1814 map. The present name dates from 1844 when Rev. Jean Baptiste Thibault founded a mission there.

4. Indian Origin

The names of Indian origin refer generally to bodies of water and other places named from them. Saskatchewan is from the Cree "Kis-is-ska-tche-wan" which means swift current. Fort Saskatchewan dates from 1875 when the R.N.W.M.P. founded their first fort north of Calgary. Cooking Lake was a favourite camping area for Indians and is a translation from Cree "opiminawasi". Wabamun is also of Cree origin meaning "mirror", having been called White Lake by Palliser. Wizard Lake was called "seksyawas sakigan" by the Indians, which could be translated as Lizard Lake. This was corrupted and changed to Wizard and is sometimes known as Conjuring Lake.

Other Indian names are also found. Ministik is from the Cree for "island". Pembina is a corruption of "neepimenan", Cree for cranberry. Manawan means "egg gathering place" describing its use during Indian days. Blackmud is also from Cree - "Kas-ki-tee-oo asiki" and Nakamun is of similar derivation meaning "song of praise" in the Indian language.

The town and municipal district of Stony Plain are also thought to be named such since this was a favourite camping place for the Stoney Indians. This tribe was the northern branch of the Assiniboines and is now found on the Morley Reserve west of Calgary. Others state that the name originated because of many boulders found in the area, unlike most portions of the plains.

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5. Early Settlers' Names

Various settlements have taken their name from one of the first settlers in the area. Gibbons, for example, was named after the man who owned the parcel upon which the station grounds were built in 1917. Breton was named after D.C. Breton in 1926. He was an early settler and member of the provincial legislature. Lamoureux commemorates Joseph Lamoureux who left Quebec to go to the California goldfields. He subsequently came to the area by way of Montana in 1877, the hamlet being named after him in 1896. Clover Bar originated in the same period, 1897, and is named after the California gold miner, Thomas H. Clover, who came by way of the Fraser Gold Rush, and washed gravel for gold on the North Saskatchewan in the 1860's. Gunn is named for Peter Gunn, a native of Scotland, who came to Canada in 1883 and spent many years with the Hudson's Bay Company.

6. Other Individuals' Names

Various persons have been commemorated by having places named for them. Leduc in 1890 was so named by Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney when a telegraph station was established, after Father Hippolyte Leduc, a missionary from France. Strathcona was, of course, named after Lord Strathcona, High Commissioner for Canada in London, 1896 - 1914, and Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Morinville was founded by Quebec-born Abbe Jean-Baptiste Morin in 1891. Legal was named in 1898 after the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Edmonton, Mgr. Emile Joseph Legal, who was a missionary for many years in the Province.

Postmasters often were commemorated in place names. Entwistle was named after J.D. Entwistle in 1908, who was postmaster. Mayerthorpe

was after R.I. Mayer in 1915. Miquelon Lake, in 1893, was named after P.A. Miquelon, Wetaskiwin postmaster at the time. These men founded their respective post offices at a time when not even a hamlet had been formed in the respective areas.

7. Descriptive Names

Various place names originated from the locale in which they existed. Spruce Grove is one example. Whitemud Creek was named because an adjacent hill was used for its calcareous mud to be applied as whitewash on Hudson's Bay Company posts. Large quantities were taken every spring from the creek area which was named "wapitanisk" in Cree.

The name Sturgeon also was so named because of the fish found in the river. The municipality is, of course, named from the river, which was named from the abundance of Sturgeon as early as 1814 by David Thompson.

Pigeon Lake is from a descriptive origin as it was called Woodpecker Lake by the Crees, "hmihmoosakhahigan" and by the Stoney "Kakagamna". How the name "Pigeon" came from this is however not known.

8. Other Origins

Place names originate from various sources. One of the most interesting is Onoway, which comes from Onaway, a character in Longfellow's poem Hiawatha. The name was spelled in error by the founders in 1904. New Sarepta in 1905 was renamed from Little Hay Lakes. A biblical reference to the name Sarepta is found in St. Luke IV, 26: "But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta a city of Sidon . . ."

Devon, of course, originates from the formation which contains the oil in the Leduc field. The Devonian era is the one in which the petroleum was formed.

Lac la Nonne was called "mikasioo" or Eagle Lake in Cree. One explanation of the present name is that it was named after the white-winged scoter (ordemia deglandi) which has white wing bars and a white spot on the head, otherwise being black. The bird looked like a black-robed nun. However, this explanation was doubted by the Geographic Board of the Department of the Interior in 1928.

Conclusion

The place names within the region have a fascinating range of origins, but we are inclined to accept matter of factly that they have always existed. It is of value to remember occasionally the early missionaries, and the pioneers the names have honored. Or to consider the different nationalities, who are a part of the cultural mosaic of the region, and who in some cases, in naming their settlements, recalled their distant homelands.

A knowledge of place names may occasionally serve some useful purpose in indicating permanence or change. The fact that the Sturgeon River was named after the abundance of Sturgeon might lead to a useful examination of what natural or man-made changes have altered it. Similarly, the fact that Egg Lake (Manawan) was from earliest times a place to gather the eggs of water fowl indicates that its nature has remained relatively unchanged with time, except that it has even less water. The names of Indian derivation are of value in this respect since they are usually related to some particular fact or function of the area.

Although some such indirect value may be derived from a knowledge of place names, the value is perhaps more that it provides in part

some knowledge of our traditions and origins.

NOTE: The source of this information is Place Names of Alberta,
Department of the Interior, Ottawa, 1928, 138 pp.

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